

War and Peace

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- [0 : 0 0] Please take your Bibles and open them up to Genesis chapter 14 this morning. And our passage is all of chapter 14 this morning. You know, somebody asked me again this morning, are you really going to read that whole list of names and places?
- You know, we could skip some of that if you really wanted to. And I just, you know, have I been with you so long and you don't know me? All scripture is God breathed and profitable and useful.
- And we will stand and read all of Genesis chapter 14. Let's stand in honor of the reading of God's word this morning. Be gracious to me, please. In the days of Amraphel, king of Shinar, Ariok, king of Elessar, Kedor-Lehomer, king of Elam, and Tidal king of Goim.
- These kings made war with Bera, king of Sodom, Bersha, king of Gomorrah, Shinab, king of Adma, Shemaber, king of Zeboim, and the king of Bila, that is, Zoar.
- And all these joined forces in the valley of Sidim, that is, the Salt Sea. Twelve years they had served Kedor-Lehomer, but in the thirteenth year they rebelled. In the fourteenth year, Kedor-Lehomer and the kings who were with him came and defeated the Rephaim and the Ashtaroth-Karnaim, the Zuzim and Ham, the Emim and Shabba-Kiriathim, and the Horites in their hill country of Seir, as far as El-Paran on the border of the wilderness.
- [1 : 2 4] Then they turned back and came to En-Mishpat, that is, Kadesh, and defeated all the country of the Amalekites and also the Amorites who were dwelling in Hezazon-Tamar. Then the king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Adma, the king of Zeboim, and the king of Bila, that is, Zoar, went out and they joined battle in the valley of Sidim with Keter-Lehomer, king of Elam, Tidal king of Goim, Amraphel, king of Shinar, and Ariok, king of Elessar, four kings against five.
- Now the valley of Sidim was full of bitumen pits, and as the kings of Sodom and Gomorrah fled, some fell into them, and the rest fled to the hill country. So the enemy took all the possessions of Sodom and Gomorrah and all their provisions and went their way.
- They also took Lot, the son of Abram's brother, who was dwelling in Sodom, and his possessions and went their way. Then one who had escaped came and told Abram, the Hebrew, who was living by the oaks of Mamre, the Amorite, brother of Eshcol and of Aner.
- These were allies of Abram. And when Abram heard that his kinsmen had been taken captive, he led forth his trained men born in his house, 318 of them, and went in pursuit as far as Dan.
- And he divided his forces against them by night, he and his servants, and defeated them and pursued them to Hobah, north of Damascus. Then he brought back all the possessions and also brought back his kinsmen Lot with his possessions and the women and the people.
- [2 : 5 4] After his return from the defeat of Keter-Lehomer and the kings who were with him, the king of Sodom went out to meet him at the valley of Shabbat, that is, the king's valley. And Melchizedek, king of Salem, brought out bread and wine.

He was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram by God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand.

And Abram gave him a tenth of everything. And the king of Sodom said to Abram, Give me the persons, but take the goods for yourself. But Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted my hand to the Lord God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours, lest you should say, I have made Abram rich.

I will take nothing but what the young men have eaten and the share of the men who went with me. Let Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre take their share. Grass withers, flower fades, but the word of the Lord endures forever.

Father, we praise you for this passage of scripture. We praise you for your commitment to your promises. And we pray now that as we read of them once again, developing in Abram's life, that we would be reminded and encouraged by your commitment to your promises towards us in Christ.

[4 : 19] We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. We are in a pretty incredible section of scripture here in the story of Abram, and we've seen over the past few weeks that God has made some incredible promises to Abram.

Promises that ultimately find their fulfillment in Christ and then come to us by faith. So chapter 12, we saw him promise, I will make you a great nation.

I will bless you. I will make your name great so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

And he promised to your offspring, I will give this land. I will make your offspring as dust of the earth so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your offspring can also be counted.

That was chapter 13. These are incredible promises. And we saw last week that no threat, whether internal or external, can ever nullify the promises of God.

[5 : 31] God will accomplish all his promises ultimately in Christ. This passage is another demonstration of God's commitment to his promises.

This morning we see that Abram faces yet again two more threats to the promises. And we see the threat of war here in the first half of the chapter there in verses 1 through 16.

There's war in the land. And then we see this threat of temptation in the back half of the chapter in verses 17 through 24. But once again, through it all, we see God's promises succeed.

So let's take a look and we'll see two more promises for God's people. This will be our outline this morning if you're taking notes. Two more promises for God's people.

First, God promises his people success in the battle. God promises his people success in the battle.

[6 : 34] Chapter 14 starts off detailing this war in the ancient Near East. You all didn't really give me the round of applause I was hoping for reading all those names and places. I'm going to try not to rehearse as many of those as I can.

There's four kings against five here. We really have no idea, no information about these kings. They just kind of show up here in the story. And they're fighting. They're going to war. It kind of feels like we press play on the movie about halfway through, doesn't it?

We don't have the context that we wish that we had. But if nothing else, what it illustrates for us again is how far we have fallen. You remember, we're just 12, 13 chapters away from the Garden of Eden.

Adam and Eve dwelling in perfect paradise. Perfect harmony with God and with one another. There is no war. There is no violence. There is no death.

But now sin has come in, disrupted God's good creation. And now we see nation at war with nation. God dispersed the nations at the Tower of Babel and now they are coming against each other in war.

[7 : 41] And as we look out of these four walls at the nations around us, you realize this is still going on today, isn't it? As we look out and see nations warring against nation, in our time, we should be reminded at the root of all of this is that same old issue called sin.

So here are these five kings. They're from the Dead Sea area and they have, apparently they've served as vassals of this guy, Kedor Leomer, for 12 years, meaning they've likely paid him tribute, given him money and come up under his authority.

But it seems like now they've had enough and so in the 13th year, they rebel. Kedor Leomer doesn't get his check. And so in response, verses five through seven, show us that Kedor Leomer and his buddies, they go on a rampage through the ancient world.

They strike the Rephaites, they strike the Zuzites and the Horites, the Amalekites, the Amorites. These guys weren't even involved in the conflict. They weren't even involved in the rebellion, but now they're kind of tossed in as collateral in this war.

And my only assumption is that Kedor Leomer and his buddies were trying to bolster their troops, their forces by conquering all these nearby territories, strengthen numbers.

[8 : 56] And so he comes down like a tornado and he gathers up, picks up everything they can on the way in order to come and squash this rebellion. And by the time they arrive here in Hazazon Tamar, they're now on the western side of the Dead Sea and now the battle begins.

The king of Sodom, the king of Gomorrah, the king of Adma, the king of Zeboim, the king of Bila, all come out and they go to war. Verse 10.

It tells us that this valley of Sidim was full of tar pits, bitumen pits. The king of Sodom and the king of Gomorrah, they probably were realizing that their defeat was inevitable and so they fell into them.

In other words, they tossed themselves in, in defeat, and everyone else runs away to the highlands. Keterleomer and his buddies, they took away all the properties of Sodom and Gomorrah, they took all their food, they went away, and oh, by the way, they also took Lot, Abram's nephew, and all of his property, and they went away with Lot for, it says, Lot had been living in Sodom.

So now we see why this is relevant for us to know, don't we? Lot is there in Sodom. The last time we saw Lot, he was living in the direction of Zoar near Sodom, but now it looks like he has fully settled in.

[10 : 24] He's now a resident of Sodom, and now he finds himself as a prisoner of war. Verse 13 tells us an escapee comes, and he shares all of this with Abram, and now the question is, how is Abram going to respond?

How is Abram going to respond? Because last time we saw Abram and Lot, you remember things weren't going well for them, or it wasn't, or they weren't really on good terms.

They had separated, they agreed that it would be best to just go their separate ways, because the longer they stayed together, the more they were going to argue and fight with one another, so they dispersed.

But now, Abram gets word, hey Abram, your nephew, the one who stepped all over your toes in the promised land, the one who then grabbed the best land he could possibly get, the one who left you high and dry in a desert, while he went and took the well-watered land near Sodom, he's in trouble, so how will Abram respond?

I wonder what you would do. How would you respond? You all have had family issues, you've had people that have offended you, you've had people that have stepped on your toes, you've had people that have wronged you and sinned against you, you might be in a fight right now.

- [11 : 44] You may be convinced that you are right. They wronged you. How would you respond if the one who offended you is in trouble? Well, we're told that right away, what does Abram do?

Right away, Abram goes to war on behalf of Lot. When Abram heard that his relative had been taken captive, he mustered his 318 trained men once born in his house and went in pursuit as far as Dan.

You know, that's over 100 miles away. And he plans this nighttime attack. He divides the troops. He strategizes this attack. He goes in there like Rambo.

He goes in right into the battle, starts chasing down these kings and their armies. And it says he chases them all the way up to Hobah. That's north of Damascus. That's another 40 miles or so.

And most importantly, he wins. Abram recovers all the property. He defeats these rebel kings and he recovers Lot and everything that Lot owns.

- [12 : 52] And we see Abram very quickly and very eagerly, he risks his own life and gives everything he can to go and rescue Lot, even when Lot didn't deserve it.

Now, who does that sound like to you? Abram very clearly here is showing us a picture of Christ.

I wonder, do you find it hard to forgive people when they wrong you? Do you find it hard for you to let go of anger, let go of resentment, find it hard to just let go of the tension that there might be when someone you know they are at fault and they have sinned against you?

Why in the world would you go out of your way to make it right with them? Well, because we have been radically forgiven by the grace of God in Christ.

Whatever wrong somebody has done to you, it isn't even worth comparing to our sin against God. And yet God, in His love for sinners, sent Christ, who loves His enemies, Christ who came a great distance from heaven down to earth, Christ who came to pursue sinners like us, Christ who gave His life to rescue enemies of God, who were enslaved by the powers of sin and darkness, Christ who spared no expense, who leveraged every resource to crush the powers of sin and evil, Christ came and rescued us and reconciled us to God.

- [14 : 32] Jesus did that for us, those who deserve it least. And if He's done that for us, then surely, of all people, Christians ought to be quick to forgive others.

This is what Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter 4. He says, Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another as God in Christ forgave you.

Abram shows Lot here, unmerited forgiveness. But notice also what's happening here with Abram.

In light of the promises of God, we're seeing this promised blessing unfold here in Abram's life, aren't we? You remember God promised to multiply Abram. God promised to make Abram a great nation.

And now here, we see Abram has 318 trained men that are born in His own house. That's incredible, isn't it? He is multiplying before our very eyes.

- [15 : 36] Of course, we know these aren't His own offspring. These are just members of His camp. But we see His camp is enlarging. There's a threat here. The land is occupied by enemy kings.

They're waging war against each other. But here is Abram literally going to war. Now here he is, again, peeling back the influence of the enemy in the land and gaining territory for the kingdom of God.

God promised to multiply His offspring and give Him the land. And so it's like He's invincible. He doesn't even hesitate to go in and to go to war and join the battle.

And again, as we look forwards and filter this through God's promises for us in Christ, we see here just a small picture of our mission as a church and the confidence that we ought to have in light of the promises of God.

God's people, both then and now, are in a battle with the powers of sin and darkness. On this side of the cross where we are, we aren't taking up arms and we aren't bearing physical weapons and going to war with physical nations, but church, you realize we are still very much in a battle, don't you?

[17:01] We're called to take up the whole armor of God and stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

We are still at war. We're called as God's people to go and to conquer the enemies of God, to go and gain ground from the enemy.

And how do we do that? Not with sword and spear, but by taking the good news of the gospel to the ends of the earth. That's the battle command of Christ, our King, isn't it?

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all I've commanded you.

That's our mission. And what's the promise? He says, all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. And surely I am with you until the end of the age.

[18:06] Church, God has promised us victory in Christ. As we go about obeying His command, in fact, He has already conquered every enemy at the cross of Christ.

The snake has been crushed at the cross of Christ. He is a defeated enemy. He prowls around like a roaring lion, yes, but He is a wounded enemy.

He is a lion on a leash. And one day, He will finally be destroyed at the return of Christ. In the meantime, as we wage war against the forces of darkness, remember that we wage war against a defeated enemy.

We worship a risen King, one who's triumphed over sin and death and the devil, one who has come to set the captives free. We fight in a battle already won in Christ.

So we see God has promised His people victory in battle. That's one promise. Here in verses 17 through 24, we see another. Second, another promise of God for His people.

[19:15] Second, we see God has promised His people blessing by faith. God has promised His people blessing by faith.

Look there to verse 17. And we see immediately after this victory in battle, what happens? Abram faces a temptation here at the end of the passage.

Isn't that how it always goes? The enemy is not dumb. He's clever, isn't he? He knows that the best time to tempt someone is not really when they're geared up and full of adrenaline and ready to go to war.

He waits, he bides his time until that battle is over and you're tired, you're ready to celebrate and you've won and your guard is down. That's when the temptation comes.

That's exactly what's happening here with Abram. Look there at verse 17. It says, these two kings come out to meet Abram in the king's valley. And what I want you to see is that these two kings represent two very different paths of blessing for Abram and for us.

[20 : 27] The first king to come out is the king of Sodom. Now what in the world is he doing here? You remember what we already know about Sodom. These people, we were told, are great sinners against the Lord.

What does this king want with Abram? We'll come back to him. But the second king is this mysterious figure named Melchizedek, king of Salem. Who in the world is that?

And we don't really know much about him, do we? Again, he comes out unannounced. He comes out to bless Abram. This guy, Melchizedek, comes, he sets the table, he plays host, he brings out bread and wine and he blesses Abram in the name of the Lord.

He says, blessed be Abram by God most high, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be God most high who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And in response, we see Abram, he pays a tithe.

He gives him 10%. He gives him a tenth of everything. He pays tithes to this mysterious king. Who is this guy, Melchizedek? Melchizedek. It really is very strange.

[21 : 34] We don't know much about him. He shows up unannounced. We have no genealogical record of his birth. His origins are a mystery. And then after this moment in the book of Genesis, he's gone.

He never shows up again. Well, what do we know about him? Well, we know his name for one thing. Melchizedek means king of righteousness.

Melchizedek is two Hebrew words. King of righteousness. And right away, we're meant to see a contrast here with the king of Sodom. Again, king of Sodom, he's king of a city of wicked people.

We might call him king of wickedness. But in contrast, here comes Melchizedek, whoever he is, king of righteousness. You see the contrast. Not only that, but we also know he's king of Salem, which means, again, by translation, he is king of peace.

He's king of the ancient city of Jerusalem. Long before the days of David, Sodom was right here in the middle of this war. He's a man of rebellion, a man of violence.

[22 : 44] But this king of Salem, he wasn't even a part of the battle. He's a king of peace. But he's not just king, is he? Verse 18 tells us he is a priest as well.

But not just any priest. It says he is a priest of God Most High. That's very unusual. Isn't it interesting that this mysterious king seems to know God and to worship God alone?

This mysterious king, he recognizes God Most High as creator of all things, heaven and earth. He recognizes God alone as the source of Abram's blessing. He recognizes God alone as the one who granted Abram victory in the battle.

And he knows that any blessing that's going to come to Abram has to come from God and God alone. Who is this guy? Now all of these factors combined have led some to say this must be the pre-incarnate Christ.

This must be Jesus. The Son of God. And while I get it, I'm not sure that I can go quite that far. But what we can say with confidence is that at the very least this Melchizedek is a shadow to which Christ is the substance.

[24 : 05] He is a pointer pointing us forward to the true king of righteousness, Christ. He is pointing us forward towards the true king of peace, Christ.

He is pointing us forward to the one who is true prophet and priest and king. The one who is truly eternal God without beginning or end. Christ who is the source of all blessing for God's people.

He is the one who is a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. Well this mystery is interrupted for a moment here in verse 21 again by the king of Sodom.

I said this was a temptation for Abram and here it is. The king of Sodom speaks up and he says you give me the people but you take all the goods for yourself. Give me the people and I will bless you with the spoils of war.

Again notice the contrast. Not a blessing in the name of God most high like Melchizedek. Rather a blessing that would come from king of Sodom.

[25 : 18] You can imagine the temptation can't you? Abram has just worked hard and he has just gone to war against multiple kings and their armies and surely he has to be thinking on one level I've earned this blessing.

Right? I deserve this blessing. I want this blessing. Look how Abram responds. He responds definitively and clearly I will not take anything from you king of Sodom.

I have lifted my hand to the Lord God most high possessor of heaven and earth that I would not take a thread or a sandal strap or anything that is yours. Why?

Lest you should say I have made Abram rich. You see it? Why does Abram respond like this? Abram's response teaches us an incredibly important lesson.

I want you to listen to me here. Here it is. God alone must get the glory for Abram's blessing. God alone must get all glory for Abram's victory in war.

[26 : 42] In the years to come when Abram's offspring are multiplied and years to come when God gives him the land and years to come when God has blessed him greatly the king of Sodom won't be able to take any of the credit for it.

Sodom will not get any glory for Abram's blessing. That glory belongs rightfully to God and God alone. Abram trusts by faith that God will bless him in God's time, in God's way, and so no one else will get the credit but God alone.

church, do you seek the blessing of the Lord like Abram by faith in his promises or are you ever tempted to chase blessing in ways that might rob God of his glory?

I know a pastor friend who served as an associate pastor in a church where there was just some unrest amongst the members. There's a contingency of people that didn't really approve of the lead pastor and the associate got a phone call one day from a member pitching this idea that they ought to do two separate services.

This is a great idea. The lead pastor can continue on and do his thing in one service but the associate, well you can go lead the other and oh by the way he would be well compensated.

[28 : 11] Just think about that. It was a not so subtle attempt to divide the church and undermine the pastor but the temptation underneath it is well hey here's an opportunity to lead and to preach and here's an opportunity to gain some extra income a pay raise hey take these blessings.

We face temptations like this all the time don't we? Opportunities to chase blessing chase pleasure chase happiness chase money but we have to ask at what cost?

You want a promotion and you could get it by throwing your co-worker under the bus and you want a little pay raise and you could get it by letting your integrity slip you want the blessing of money and you could get it just by a little white lie here and there at work you want the blessing of sex and you could get it by hopping on an app looking for a hookup or find some pornography on the internet may we be faithful like Abram to say I will not chase blessing in any way that will rob God of the glory that he alone is due church we have to by God's grace reframe our view of the world so that we no longer have us in the center and this obsession that the world has with blessing blessing blessing blessing at all costs blessing that I deserve blessing that I worked hard for blessing that I want blessing that I need and instead put

God and his glory at the center where he rightly belongs God's glory not your blessing is ultimate in every decision in every situation in every opportunity in every moment the driving motivator of all things shouldn't be how can I get what I want but rather how can God's glory be magnified and from time to time with great discernment and wisdom church that might mean rejecting an offer that seems good for the sole reason that it might rob God of the glory that he's due takes great faith to trust God to bless in his time in his way but that's exactly what he's promised us in Christ do you realize church

God has promised you eternal blessing in Christ Jesus eternal joy eternal life blessing that far outweighs any blessing you could get in this world one of my favorite passages in the Bible is Ephesians chapter one we read it this morning in grow class Paul tells us in Ephesians chapter one blessed be the God and father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places even as he chose us in him from before the foundation of the world that we should be holy and blameless before him in love he predestined us for adoption to himself as sons through Jesus Christ according to the purpose of his will to the praise of his glorious grace with which he has blessed us in the beloved in him we have redemption through his blood the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace which he has lavished upon us in all wisdom and insight making known to us the mystery of his will according to his purpose which he set forth in

[32 : 10] Christ as a plan for the fullness of time to unite all things in him things in heaven and things on earth in him we have obtained an inheritance having been predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things according to the counsel of his will so that we who!

were the first to hope the gospel of your salvation and believed in him you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it to the praise of his glory do you hear that refrain God has promised us great blessing in Christ received by faith in him and all of it from beginning to end is for the praise of his glorious grace for the magnification of the glory of God your blessing is not about you ultimately God blesses you to the praise of his glorious grace so we ought to chase blessing in a way that magnifies the glory of his grace not in a way that has us at the center all of us in many ways are tempted to rob

God of glory he's due here we see in this moment Abram he succeeds he passes the test but unfortunately where Abram here succeeds in the temptation unfortunately church if we're honest we would admit that we all often fail we fail to forgive as God has forgiven us in Christ we fail to go to war against the forces of sin and evil we fail to go and make disciples we fail to go gain ground for the kingdom of God we fail to seek God's blessing in God's way by faith in Christ alone which is why I am so thankful that we have such a great high priest who covers all my sin here again Abram points us forwards to

Jesus who immediately after his baptism after this great moment of victory this high point in the beginning of the public ministry of Christ immediately afterwards what happens immediately afterwards he is driven out in the wilderness to be tempted by Satan and do you see a similarity do you remember Satan's temptation I will give you all of this if you would only bow down and worship me give me the glory Jesus and I will give you the blessing let me put my stamp on your greatness let me put my stamp on your blessing give me the credit honor me and what does Christ do praise God like Abram here Christ Jesus does not bow down he refuses to receive even the slightest blessing from the enemy he entrusts himself to the Lord and his promise of blessing not just for a moment but for all of eternity for a life of perfect faith and obedience he gave

God all the glory when we face temptation and opportunities come to to chase blessing at the expense of God's glory church look to Jesus the author of Hebrews tells us he is able to help those who are being tempted for we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weakness but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are yet without sin let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need church the good news is Christ Jesus is our great high priest after the order of Melchizedek he is king of heaven he is king of peace he is king of righteousness he is our king victorious in battle he is our king who has conquered every enemy and has pursued us and rescued us by his own blood he is eternal

[37:10] God and he stands to bless us by faith in him father we praise you for this undeserved unmerited blessing in Christ Lord and we confess the many ways that we are tempted to chase blessing apart from you but Lord we pray by your grace would you lead us to trust in all the promises of God this promise of eternal blessing found in Christ alone if there is any here who don't know you by faith!

would you give them the gift of faith this morning now and Lord we pray that as we look to you by faith Father would you renew our confidence in all your promises we pray this in Jesus name Amen